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ABSTRACT

Based on perceptions from interviews and the available literature, this report examines the manner in which Oklahoma's libraries and library-related institutions or agencies deal with continuing professional library education. A discussion of providers and consumers describes the provision of staff and career development opportunities by library schools, professional library and other organizations, library and information centers, the Oklahoma Department of Libraries (ODL), and the Oklahoma Network for Continuing Education. In addition, the major consumers of such programs are identified as library and information science professionals who possess an MLS (master of library science) or equivalent graduate degree, non-degreed librarians employed in professional capacities, and/or library staff members. A discussion of program content indicates that the content and level of programs vary according to the provider's perception of the consumer's background, need, and location; and a description of program formats includes conferences, short courses, workshops, and talkback television offered by various providers. Finally, based on 16 specific findings, 6 primary and 18 additional recommendations for statewide program planning for continuing professional library and information science education are presented. It is concluded that, despite the commitment to continuing education in Oklahoma, both consumers and providers must be convinced that lifelong learning and education are as important as formal, initial education. (KM)

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A POSITION PAPER ON CONTINUING EDUCATION WITHIN THE PROFESSION OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE

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A Position Paper on Continuing Education within the Profession of Library and Information Science

INTRODUCTION

The concept of continuing professional library education is widely accepted by library professionals, educators, and organizations. All agree that with today's ever changing and complex technology, education required for a degree in library science, certification for a library media specialist, or licensure becomes outdated within a few years. Further, "the conception of education as a lifelong process in which the traditional segmentation of education (sic) experience becomes dysfunctional" is a widely accepted assumption. "Learning is forever."

For this position paper, a survey was undertaken to examine the manner in which Oklahoma's libraries and library-related institutions or agencies were dealing with continuing professional library education. Specifically, it is a presentation of perceptions based on interviews and

available literature outlining what has and is being done within the state. Within the specified timeframe, it was not possible to conduct a "research survey" nor to contact all libraries regarding their continuing education opportunities.

In order to address the issue of continuing professional education for the library and information scientist, the following working definition of continuing education, attributed to the Australian Secretary of State for Education and Science, is adopted. It provides a good framework.

> Continuing education is everything other than initial education, the sustained preparatory period of formal study to whatever level completed before seeking main employment. Continuing education ranges from the most basic levels of study to post-graduate work and may provide opportunities to acquire basic skills and knowledge; a second chance to follow higher or further education courses which the student was unable or unwilling to undertake on leaving school; opportunities to update or increase skills relating to employment in mid-career, or a means of preparing for changes in lifestyle and personal circumstances or developing latent interests and abilities. No one, however long or comprehensive their initial education, can hope or should expect to acquire during it all the skills and knowledge they will need during a working life of perhaps forty years. (Sheila Dale, 1985)

Using the above parameters, the following areas were examined and are discussed within the paper:

I. Providers and Consumers: Staff and Career Development

II. Content and Format

III. Needs and Relevance

The findings and recommendations in this study were reached based on the findings in the areas studied. Certain areas which may be studied at some future date are the quality and effectiveness of continuing education presentations; the comprehensiveness of coverage of topics and offerings; and the responsiveness of practitioners.

PROVIDERS AND CONSUMERS: STAFF AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

There is no one organization or group of persons responsible for statewide planning, coordination, and

provision of continuing professional education to Oklahoma's library and information professionals. In fact, there are multiple providers, such as:

- Library schools (both ALA accredited and others)
- Professional library and other organizations
- Library and information centers:
  - Public libraries
  - Academic libraries
  - Special libraries
- The Oklahoma Department of Libraries (ODL)
- Oklahoma Network for Continuing Education Foundation

NOTE: School libraries have not been included in the discussion as providers. Because certification is required in order to work as a library media specialist in the state's public schools, school librarians are more often consumers than providers.

The University of Oklahoma School of Library and Information Studies (SLIS) believes that professional education does not end with the master's degree. The SLIS is considered a significant provider of continuing professional education, in that it provides courses or programs of an upper level nature. Faculty members are called upon to provide workshops, seminars, and presentations to library groups, conferences, etc. The School also offers a sixth year certificate program, an

opportunity to explore international librarianship through its Oxford Seminar, and the annual Festival of Books -- all genuinely designed for the post-M.L.S. student. (The Festival of Books, however, is accessible to both degreed and non-degreed librarians.)

In 1984, the Director requested a position statement on continuing education. This statement, prepared by a working group of faculty and practitioners, was adopted in 1985 and outlined the purposes of a continuing education program:

- to keep practitioners abreast of new concepts, knowledge, and skills both within the field and within related, relevant disciplines
- to update their basic library/information science and media education
- to refresh them in various aspects of their basic education
- to prepare them for changes in personal career lines by providing opportunity to perform new roles within the profession
- to enable them to master new views of the profession itself as its membership seeks to discharge effectively the social responsibilities and roles imposed on it.

This position paper emphasized the need for continuing education as well as an expanded continuing education program. The committee agreed that results could not be achieved without a program coordinator and adequate funding for implementing and maintaining such a program.

Departments of library science in other colleges and universities within the state provide formal courses for teachers (and others) who wish to become school library media specialists, as well as short courses for professionals. For instance, Northwestern State University offers a course on beginning geneology open to degreed and non-degreed librarians.

Professional organizations are among the most active, visible and opportune providers of continuing education. For instance, librarians look toward meetings and conferences sponsored by:

- national organizations, such as
  - American Library Assocation
  - American Society for Information Science
  - Association of College and Research Libraries
  - Association of Library and Information Science Education

Medical Library Association
Public Library Assocation
Special Library Association

- regional organizations, such as
  South Central Regional Group of the Medical Library Assocation

- state organizations, such as
  Continuing Education Committee, Junior Member's Roundtable, and the Library Education Division of the Oklahoma Library Assocation
  Oklahoma chapters of the American Society for Information Science and the Special Libraries Association

to provide opportunities for staff and career development, and professional advancement.

The academic, public, and special libraries provide continuing education most generally in the form of in-service training for their degreed and non-degreed library staff. For instance, the Tulsa City/County Library System provides four half-day sessions covering general orientation to the library, the philosophy and goals of the library, reference materials, and material selection. The Metropolitan Library System also offers similar training for their staff. In addition to inservice courses, some initiate conference types of meetings attended by staff

and others. For example, the Dean of Libraries at the University of Oklahoma appears to be responsible for continuing education and has developed a series of annual conferences and workshops dealing with various aspects of librarianship. In all cases, when funds are available library directors will send staff members to attend workshops and seminars presented outside the library.

The Oklahoma Department of Libraries (ODL), a state agency, plays a major role in providing continuing education for all types of libraries. Each of its annual publications discussing long-range plans for library development as well as its annual report of performance includes a statement on continuing education. Such a statement has been included since the 1978 Battelle study, A Needs Assessment Study of Oklahoma Libraries, which recommended that Oklahoma "continue and expand its program of continuing education for librarians." Among other plaudites, that study commended the ODL for its provision of continuing education to librarians in rural areas. In the more recently approved long-range program

for 1982-1986 published by the ODL, there is a statement on continuing education for library personnel that includes a definition of continuing education and criteria for determining adequacy, status, and needs. Additionally, the Oklahoma Department of Libraries has designated one member of its staff as a continuing education coordinator. This is one of the few agencies in the state that has designated a person to work in this capacity. The objectives of ODL's coordinator include:

(1) to produce a statewide continuing education plan

(2) to provide needed statewide and local C.E. opportunities

(3) to plan and produce continuing education programs for special groups on special subjects

(4) and to actively promote continuing education opportunities for Oklahoma library personnel.

As part of the Library Services and Construction Act (LSCA) program, the Oklahoma Department of Libraries is able to award $1500 per annum to libraries throughout the state to conduct workshops and conferences. Libraries, divisions and committees of the Oklahoma Library

Association (OLA) and other institutions apply for a portion of this grant. In 1987, for instance, an award was presented to the Library Education Division of OLA to sponsor Albert Shanker to speak on excellence in education. Another award was presented for an OLA pre-conference workshop on library buildings.

The Oklahoma Department of Libraries publishes a pamphlet entitled Library Education Available in Oklahoma: Learning Never Ends. This is a valuable publication and is one of the few places that lists telecommunication legs for talkback television, and provides some information on workshops, seminars, and course offerings throughout the state. The publication of this document was endangered by lack of funds, but because of its value as a directory of continuing education opportunities, the Library Education Division/OLA strongly recommended that it be continued. We were pleased to find that it is still published.

A series of leadership training seminars for faculty, administrators, and executives has been provided by the

Oklahoma Network for Continuing Education Foundation. Librarians have attended these seminars.

Although their continuing education programs have not been specifically addressed, special libraries provide both in-service and career training opportunities. As an example, the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center sponsors and co-sponsors workshops, teleconferences, lectures, etc., which cover many areas of medical librarianship.

The major consumers of these professional continuing education programs are library and information science professionals who possess an M.L.S. or equivalent graduate degree, non-degreed librarians employeed in professional capacities, and/or library staff members. Participants are primarily Oklahomans, although many of the programs do attract attendees from surrounding states and nationwide.

In addition to librarians and staff members, many public libraries offer programs for their trustees and/or friends of the library.

CONTENT AND FORMAT

The content and level of continuing education programs appears to be dependent upon the provider's understanding of the variety of educational backgrounds of the consumers, their perception of need, and the area is which the library is located (i.e., rural or metropolitan). It was observed that the providers of continuing education programs in Oklahoma attempt to recognize and meet the diverse needs of library and information science professionals.

As mentioned above, the content of the continuing education programs offered to Oklahoma's library and information science specialists varies. The programs may be delivered through conferences, short courses, workshops, talkback television. They attract administrators, middle management, practitioners, or clerical and other support staff. By offering programs in the evenings and on Saturdays, working librarians may avail themselves of the opportunity to take advantage of continuing education.

At the School of Library and Information Studies (University of Oklahoma) continuing education opportunities exist in both traditional and formal settings, as well as through nonformal off campus workshops, consultations, etc. An example is the sixth year certificate program. Librarians, with the aid of a committee, prepare their own course of study in order to meet the following objectives:

(1) to provide an individual the opportunity to upgrade and update knowledge in library and information science

(2) to redirect or strengthen a career path or a library function

(3) to develop awareness of the importance of research in library/information science and its application in the field.

Students are required to complete thirty semester hours of coursework selected from the regular program of studies, but may elect to take independent research or readings with a specific faculty member. Students may opt to take courses suited to their needs in other departments within the university.

The Oxford Seminar is an enrichment program focusing on English libraries and librarianship. In addition to attending lectures delivered by outstanding British librarians, participants visit the Bodlein and other college libraries of Oxford University and the so called "red brick" universities in England, tour the Blackwell Publishing Company, and have the option of visiting libraries that deal with their special interests.

One of the Schools's most successful continuing education programs is the Festival of Books. Held annually on the campus of the University of Oklahoma, the fesitival provides children, young adults, and school librarians with the opportunity to meet and hear noted authors in the field of children's literature.

Nationally, there is a vast array of continuing education programs available to librarians. For instance, many attend annual conferences dealing with a specific theme such as the Online Conference and Exposition where they learn about advances and trends in the online database industry, microcomputers and online applications.

Annual conferences sponsored by such professional organizations as the American Library Association and the Special Library Association consistently offer seminars and workshops on current "hot" topics, such as optical information systems, censorship, copyright, policies relating to national information, records management, microfilms, and so forth. Several librarians attended management conferences sponsored by Harvard University or the American Management Association. Librarians interested in international librarianship may be provided with funds (or use their own) to attend the International Federation of Librarianship Assocation conferences.

Library science educators attend the Association of Library and Infromation Science Educators (ALISE) annual conference which offers workshops and seminars. The ALISE journal contains a regular column on continuing education which, in a sense, is an indication that continuing education is considered a priority need.

Within the state, the Oklahoma Library Assocation is one of the primary providers of continuing education. At one of the first meetings of the OLA executive committee, the continuing education coordinator of the Oklahoma Department of Libraries and the executive committee plan workshops to be presented within the year.

Within the various types of libraries, employers conduct on-the-job training, think tanks for executives and faculty in the form of retreats, and workshops for professionals. These may include sessions on the library's philosophy, goals and objectives, new reference materials, material selection, as well as requested topics such as handling a difficult employee, stress management, and other topics perceived as needed.

Commercial organizations, such as DIALOG, AMIGOS and other data base producers, bring their training sessions to Oklahoma's libraries upon request...and at a price.

The workshop format is extremely popular and appears to be in line with the nationwide trend. In 1986, ALISE reported that workshops constitute the most often used format (38%) for presenting continuing education events.

Talkback television is another format used to deliver courses. From 1980 through 1985, the School of Library and Information Studies at O.U. provided at least one or two courses per semester via talkback television. There have been several problems with delivery of courses through this medium, but these are correctable. The mechanism is indeed viable. This mode of delivery is used by Rose State College to offer library technical assistant courses.

EVALUATION AND RELEVANCE

No attempt was made to retrospectively evalute either the effectiveness, quality, or comprehensiveness of the offerings of the different providers. This would be a major undertaking. It would also assume that all programs have been evaluated. Many interviewed raised

questions concerning targeted audiences, relating programs to individual needs, and establishing standards of quality and criteria for evaluation. In general, however, persons interviewed expressed satisfaction with the courses that they had attended.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

FINDINGS

The library professionals within the state are committed to the principle of continuing professional education and agree that it is a priority need, but realize that continuing education becomes low priority when funds are low.

Throughout the state several dozen workshops, conferences, and short courses are presented each year. In addition, individualized study opportunities have been provided. Directors of libraries are interested in providing staff and career training opportunities but have been handicapped by financial, geographic, or other factors. Some of the findings pertaining to these factors follow.

1. There is no central clearinghouse within Oklahoma that lists the continuing education opportunities available and scheduled throughout the state. Since there are no lists of professionals responsible for continuing education or of experts in adult education, in order to identify continuing education one must contact each type of provider.

2. The present economic situation in Oklahoma has placed severe limitations on continuing education opportunities. Academic libraries, particularly those dependent on state funds, have not been able to allocate monies for travel and/or time for librarians to attend continuing education programs. Additionally, when vacant positions are not filled, it is not possible to send librarians to continuing education programs.

3. Academic libraries, with few exceptions, have not been active providers of continuing education programs, or have not been as active as they would like. Directors of all libraries do make every attempt to provide some type of in-house staff development programs.

4. Oklahoma's geography does affect the accessibility to courses. Staff members find it inconvenient to travel to courses after a day's work unless distances are not great -- and there are expected benefits and rewards.

5. The economic situation for all types of libraries has led to a reduction in staff and funds. Both of these factors affect remaining librarians who cannot be spared from their jobs to attend continuing education programs.

6. The Talkback Television (TBT) courses beamed from Rose State College provide an opportunity for continuing education for those interested in

becoming a library technical assistant. However, in the mind of one director of an academic institution, the courses originating from Rose State are not always based on "levels of need" and consequently are not well attended. One director stated that only two members of his staff have enrolled in the Rose State courses since the TBT leg was opened in his area.

7. Although talkback television is a viable mechanism for delivery for continuing education, providers and consumers have expressed concern with the obsolescence of the present system and the quality of the presentations. Most agree that it is an excellent alternative to attending classes at a distance, but would like to see improvements.

8. If the need for a course is expressed by the consumer, continuing education courses are generally well attended. According to one interviewee, "older" students (no attempt to specify age group was made) will not enroll in courses unless there is a need or unless they can directly benefit from such courses. To determine the validity of this finding requires additional research.

9. The Oklahoma Library Association and Oklahoma Department of Libraries are perceived as being the major providers of continuing education courses. The O.U. School of Library and Information Studies is looked to as a provider.

10. The O.U. School of Library and Information Studies is committed to continuing education and considered a provider, but expansion of the program has been limited by lack of funds and staff.

11. Academic faculty have indicated that where possible continuing education courses should be contracted. It was their observation that business and industry contracts for courses and that in these instances the courses have been successful.

12. There is no coordinated, formal continuing education program in the state. Indeed, most programs appear to be provided on an ad hoc basis. As needs are perceived an attempt is made to gratify them.

13. Many professional librarians look toward conferences, meetings, and workshops from professional organizations as well as universities as a means of gratifying their needs for continuing education. They are interested in both credit and non-credit courses regardless of the type of provider.

14. For the library school at O.U., talkback television opportunities have been limited to the Tulsa area. Several professionals have asked that the SLIS be permitted to send courses over talkback televison to other areas throughout the state. However, due to the obsolesence of the current delivery system, talkback television has not been a popular mechanism for transmission of courses by the SLIS.

15. Outside of the metroplex area (i.e., Tulsa down to Norman), there are not enough resources (i.e., materials, personnel trained in adult education, modern technology vis-a-vis computers and telecommunication facilities, money, etc.) to support the variety of formats needed to provide multiple levels of continuing education opportunities within the state.

16. Lack of motivation on the part of the staff or lack of montivation on the part of adminstration results in lack of participation and failure.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on these findings, it appears that there is a definite need for statewide program planning for continuing professional library and information science education. Several states, incidentally, have already addressed this same topic. In New York State, for instance, the following recommendations were proposed by the State Advisory Educators in 1981 -- they are just as applicable to Oklahoma in 1987 as to New York in 1981.

1. Assess needs and audience -- find out what is needed, by whom, and when.

2. State goals and objectives: What is the purpose of the program? What should be learned?

3. Establish evaluative instruments that will determine whether the objectives have been met.

4. Consider program financing: Who will bear the costs? How much should be paid by consumers?

5. Identify available resources.

6. Design programs and mechanisms for delivery that will meet the needs of the consumers.

The following are additional recommendations based specifically on the needs of Oklahoma:

1. Professional library schools must have a secure and strong financial base, adequate faculty and library resources, rewards for developing a program of continuing education (C.E. units or other), and a strong commitment from parent institutions, trustees, and regents, in order to ensure a continuing and expanding program of continuing education to meet the needs of the state's professionals.

2. A state clearinghouse should be established to collect information about providers and experts in adult and continuing education.

3. A highly visible statewide coordinator for continuing education should be appointed to establish continuity and coordination for this statewide program. The statewide coordinator should be a facilitator, able to analyze the needs and the market for continuing education and assist in establishing goals and objectives, and evaluating the program.

4. The responsiblity for continuing education program ideas should be left with the multiple providers. However, there should be various levels of programs and sophistication to meet the diverse needs of the consumers.

5. The current directory of library education published by the Oklahoma Department of Libraries might be expanded to include all continuing education opportunities available within Oklahoma. This could be an alternative while a computerized database is developed.

6. The coordinator of continuing education should be aware of all continuing education opportunities offered within the state by professions other than library and information science since many needs are interdisciplinary in nature.

7. It is extremely important that the needs of the consumers be identified through regularly conducted surveys.

8. Available resources should be clearly identified:

   - develop a speakers' list
   - develop instructional packages and other forms of training for different levels of courses
   - identify consultants
   - identify local experts

9. Identify trends, issues, and problems that should be addressed in continuing education programs to meet the changing needs of the profession.

10. Build in evaluations before and after the program to determine if objectives were met.

11. A variety of mechanisms for providing continuing education should be developed so that continuing education can be provided at a distance, either at home base or through libraries or on campuses that are not providers.

12. Each of the providers should develop written policy statements on continuing education.

13. A strong marketing program is needed:

    a. Program listings should be developed that are readily accessible to the consumer. This could be accomplished through flyers, electronic bulletin boards, monthly newletters, whatever.

    b. The effectiveness of this publicity should be evaluated periodically.

    c. Telephone numbers should be listed so that persons who have specific needs can contact a school or coordinator to express their need for specific courses.

14. Some way should be determined to eliminate the so-called "protection of turf".

15. In order to provide long distance courses either through talkback television or on-site provision of courses there must be adequate resources. These must be timely, and easily and readily available.

16. Careful and sophisticated telecourses must be offered rather than the "talking head" types of courses. Public television provides excellent consumer oriented courses in math, social science, etc., that are educational and enjoyable to watch.

17. Careful attention should be given to demographics and geography. The number of professionals, and ease of access to and education and training of providers are essential considerations to continuing education courses.

18. There must be a committment to an annual continuing and dependable program of continuing education and staff development by all libraries with ensured funds. In this way the concept of "learning never ends" will surely become part of the professional psyche.

CONCLUSION

Judging from the number of meetings and high interest reached, there is no doubt that there is a committment to continuing education among the professionals within Oklahoma. With the opportunity for technological change of the Oklahoma telecommunication system provided by funds from the Kellogg Foundation and with the excellent promotion of the concept of continuing higher education by the Oklahoma Network for Continuing Higher Education Foundation, the future of continuing education in Oklahoma looks bright. However, time and time again, when the economic situation affects funding of libraries, the opportunities for staff and career development are among the first adversely affected. This must be changed.

It is extremely important that both the multiple consumers and providers are convinced that lifelong learning and education are a necessity and as important as formal, initial professional education. The message must be continuously impressed; the mechanisms for delivery available. With a society in which the technology precedes application, professionals must be prepared for change. They must not only react but they must make the changes occur. Libraries and librarians must change and grow in response to current, immediate and future needs. Without continuing education, it is difficult to forecast the consequences.